



December 4, 2018

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Office of the Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 18-336 and CC Docket No. 92-105 regarding the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018.

Dear Madam Secretary,

United Way of Greater Plymouth County is so appreciative of this opportunity to comment on the current efforts being undertaken by the Federal Communications Commission to study the feasibility of designating a three-digit number to the National Suicide Hotline and to assess the effectiveness of the current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. In greater Plymouth County, Massachusetts, our United Way is fighting for the health, education and financial stability by investing in 211 and ending homelessness, feeding the hungry, and reducing child abuse and neglect. We, along with almost 1,200 local United Way across our United States, believe that 211 is a vital part of the solution of meeting the needs of our most vulnerable neighbors.

We recognize that we need to work in order to create a safe place for all people to call – especially those who are underserved or marginalized such as seniors, people with physical or intellectual disabilities, people that identify as LGBTQ+, Veterans, American Natives, non-English speakers, and individuals facing complex problems such as substance/opioid use, human trafficking, and domestic violence. For more than ninety-seven years, our local United Way has been reaching out to the underserved, and today we partner with over 250 of our local businesses, our non profit health and human service providers and our other community stakeholders to drive systemic changes to solve our community's toughest problems.

We strongly urge the FCC to consider our Mass211 work here in southeastern Massachusetts as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. Since 2007, we have invested almost a quarter of a million dollars in the last 12 years to the success of Mass211 that responds to 6,000 – 7,000 requests for help each year in our region. Moreover, each year our United Way invests more than \$750,000 in mental health, substance use, health, education, and other financial stability services. These critical investments position us to be key partners in the success of an improved mental health and crisis response system.

**United Way  
of Greater Plymouth County**

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We are, however, deeply concerned that another three-digit code may erode the simplicity of a single point of access for community help. Despite concerted efforts by numerous social services, and multiple hotlines, in our community to educate and market the distinctions, a person in crisis will likely always reach for the most familiar or most accessible number. Our Mass211 call system, operated by our fellow United Way of Tri County and supported financially by all of the other local United Ways in Massachusetts, has successfully combined multiple needs for health and human information and referral services into a streamlined, unified system. We highly recommend that resources should be invested for similar unified single point of access systems with a blended partnership of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and United Way's 211 services. We believe in the power of partnership to address gaps, not duplicate services, and will be a valuable partner in the fight against suicide.

You can learn more about our work at [www.uwgpc.org](http://www.uwgpc.org) or [www.mass211.org](http://www.mass211.org), and can reach me directly at our office for additional questions or discussion at 508.583.6306 x105 or via e mail at [dcarman@uwgpc.org](mailto:dcarman@uwgpc.org). Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Dennis P. Carman".

Dennis P. Carman  
President & CEO

